

Message Text

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72

ACTION EUR-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PDEV, UK

SUBJECT: LABOR PARTY ANNOUNCES DEVOLUTION POLICY

REF: LONDON 10669 AND 11080

1. LABOR PARTY HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, UNDER DIRECTION OF
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FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN, SEPTEMBER 4 RELEASED ITS

PROPOSALS FOR DEVOLVING CERTAIN GOVERNMENT POWERS TO SCOTLAND AND WALES. THE PROPOSALS ENVISAGE DIRECTLY ELECTED ASSEMBLIES WITH EXECUTIVE POWERS IN BOTH AREAS. IN ADDITION, THE SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY WOULD HAVE LIMITED LEGISLATIVE POWER. BOTH AREAS WOULD RETAIN THEIR PRESENT NUMBER OF SEATS IN PARLIAMENT (SCOTLAND, 71 AND WALES, 36) AND THEIR CABINET SECRETARIES. THE ASSEMBLIES WOULD RECEIVE BLOCK FINANCIAL GRANTS FROM PARLIAMENT AND DETERMINE BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS FOR HOUSING, EDUCATION HEALTH AND ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING.

2. THE SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY WOULD ENJOY CERTAIN LEGISLATIVE POWER IN THE FIELDS OF HOUSING, HEALTH, EDUCATION AND HOME AFFAIRS WHICH WOULD NOT BE GRANTED THE WELSH ASSEMBLY. THIS DISTINCTION WAS BASED ON THE TRADITION OF SEPARATE SCOTTISH LAW. THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WOULD RETAIN ITS PRESENT POWERS IN ALL OTHER FIELDS.

3. ALTHOUGH THESE PROPOSALS HAVE NOT YET BEEN APPROVED BY LABOR'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE, SIGNIFICANT CHANGES ARE UNLIKELY. SIMILARLY, IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S WHITE PAPER ON DEVOLUTION WILL CONFORM CLOSELY TO THESE PROPOSALS.

4. COMMENT: THE RISE OF NATIONALISM IN SCOTLAND AND WALES PLACES THE LABOR PARTY IN THE PAINFUL POSITION OF HAVING TO CHOOSE BETWEEN SOCIALIST DOCTRINE ON THE ONE HAND AND PRACTICAL POLITICS ON THE OTHER. ALTHOUGH IDEOLOGICALLY OPPOSED TO GOVERNMENTAL DECENTRALIZATION, LABOR HAS ELECTED TO TRY TO STEM THE TIDE OF RISING REGIONALISM IN SCOTLAND (REFTELS), AND TO A LESSER EXTENT, WALES. THE RESULT, WHILE REASONABLE, WILL NOT SATISFY THE EXTREMISTS ON EITHER SIDE.

5. THE PROPOSAL GOES A LONG WAY TOWARD MEETING THE DESIRES OF SCOTTISH MODERATES, BUT DOES NOT APPEAR TO GIVE THE SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY POWER TO TAX OR TO CONTROL EVEN A PORTION OF THE ANTICIPATED NORTH SEA OIL REVENUE. THE SCOTTISH NATIONALIST PARTY (SNP), WHICH CURRENTLY HOLDS SEVEN SEATS IN PARLIAMENT AND WHICH MANY OBSERVERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BELIEVE STANDS A REASONABLE CHANCE TO DOUBLE ITS REPRESENTATION IN THE NEXT ELECTION, HAS ALREADY ATTACKED THE LABOR PROGRAM AND IS CERTAIN TO FOCUS ON THE OIL REVENUE ISSUE IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. ON THE OTHER HAND, THESE PROPOSALS PROBABLY GO TOO FAR FOR THE "CENTRALISTS" WHO CONTROL THE SCOTTISH LABOR PARTY. IN WALES, THE DIFFERENCE IN THE POWER ALLOCATED THE WELSH ASSEMBLY, WHILE BASED ON HISTORICAL PRECEDENT,

WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY PREJUDICE LABOR'S CHANCE TO
REGAIN THE TWO SEATS IT LOST TO THE WELSH NATIONALIST
PLAID CYMRU IN CLOSE CONTESTS (1700 AND 700 VOTES) IN
THE FEBRUARY 1974 ELECTION AND THREATEN A THIRD SEAT,
WHERE IT WON BY SIX VOTES OVER PLAID. SOHM

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